



10 Day Tour of Ireland

Only have 10 days? Take to the road less travelled, skimming sky-high cliffs and into buzzing towns and villages with our pick of the highlights along the way!





Hook Head Lighthouse, Co. Wexford

Day one: Dublin to Tramore

(Distance: 190km/118mls)

Where better to begin our tour than the city of Dublin, the capital of the Republic of Ireland. Designated a UNESCO City of Literature, it holds the accolade for being TripAdvisor's Friendliest City in Europe and is an all round great place to hang out. So before passing through the city limits, take a stroll around the cobbled streets of Temple Bar, colour co-ordinate the Georgian doors in Merrion Square, sample a swift pint of Guinness at St James's Gate and don't miss a visit to Trinity College and the famous 'Book of Kells'.

A lush wilderness suddenly takes over a little south of Dublin. County Wicklow, known as the 'Garden County of Ireland', has seen many people come to get lost in its sun-yellow gorse, deep purple heather, majestically green forests and the 20 hectares of eclectic botanical splendour at Powerscourt Estate in Enniskerry. As you push south you can choose to beach hop along the Wicklow/Wexford coast, including Curracloe in Wexford, where Spielberg gathered an army of extras to film the beach landing of 'Saving Private Ryan'. Or you can opt for lush river valleys by skirting Mount Leinster and the Blackstairs Mountains and heading for the River Barrow. Whether by coast or river, find your way to Hook Head, before dashing back up the estuary for a short ferry crossing to Passage East and onward to the seaside town of Tramore.

Day two: Tramore to Cork

(Distance: 117km/73mls)

Leave the bustle of Tramore behind for Waterford's amazing Copper Coast. Virtually unknown but to locals, the Copper Coast enjoys the status of a UNESCO Global Geopark, essentially an outdoor geological museum.

Built up an appetite? Do something about it in the harbour town of Dungarvan, where you can join the locals for lunch at the beloved Thursday Farmers' Market. Between Dungarvan and Youghal, the landscape presents more subtle pleasures, while the popular cliff walk around Ardmore Head and Ram's Head passes monastic ruins out towards Goat Island. Unspoiled villages dot East Cork's countryside, which, thanks to Myrtle Allen and her family in Ballymaloe Cookery School, is the heartland of country cooking. Before pushing for Cork, stop off at the Jameson Experience in Midleton for a whiskey tour. Remember to designate a driver!



Cliffs of Moher, Co. Clare

Day three: Cork to Killarney

(Distance: 151km/94mls)

Get the day started by soaking up the atmosphere of Cork city, designated Europe's 2005 Capital of Culture followed by a stop in the English Market, the Victorian landmark at the heart of Cork's culinary soul. Blarney Castle, just outside the city should not be missed, with its famous stone said to impart the gift of eloquence on all who kiss it.

From Cork to Mizen Head, Ireland's most southerly point, a chain of meticulously kept villages lies strung along the coastline. First is medieval Kinsale, a favourite of seafood enthusiasts; then on to Clonakilty, the proud birthplace of Michael Collins. Glandore, Unionhall, Baltimore, Skibbereen, Schull... all the way to Mizen Head. Take time to beat a path north through Glengarriff and Garinish Island before it's up and over Healy Pass. Catch your breath in Kenmare then onto Moll's Gap, followed by a twisting descent through Killarney National Park and into Killarney.

Day four: Killarney to Galway

(Distance: 251km/156mls)

Take the opportunity to detour around the famous Ring of Kerry. Decision time. One option is to follow the main Killarney to Limerick road through rolling farmland and the pretty village of Adare. In Limerick, gaze at the Shannon river from the walls of King John's Castle before crossing the river into County Clare via Bunratty Castle and Folk Park. The alternative takes you through Tralee and North Kerry. A half an hour should do for a gentle walk around Nun's Beach at Ballybunion, and then it's off to Tarbert for a ferry across the Shannon to Clare and a drive up the Atlantic coast. High or low, all roads lead to the Cliffs of Moher and the Burren's contorted limestone landscape. Follow the coast road around Galway Bay, stopping in Ballyvaughan or Kinvara for a late afternoon break before an overnight stay in Galway city, venue for the finish of the Volvo Round the World Ocean Race in 2012.





Benbulbin, Drumcliff, Co. Sligo

Day five: Galway to Westport

(Distance: 138km/96mls)

Make your way out along the northern shore of Galway Bay. The landscape grows increasingly bleak until Rossaveal. Suddenly, an enormous expanse of watery bog unfolds, along with the moody shapes of the Twelve Pins. But don't let the apparent bleakness fool you. Intriguing pockets of life can be found tucked away. Deep in the heart of the Connemara Gaeltacht, the peninsula of Carraroe is a hotbed of Irish language and culture. The village of Roundstone surges with energy in summer, and the coast road from here to Clifden is speckled with pretty cottages. Continue on to Letterfrack for the Connemara National Park. Scenery hounds will follow the road to Leenaun, while culture vultures will aim for Kylemore Abbey. Everyone joins up at Killary Harbour – Ireland's only fjord – before crossing into Mayo and Clew Bay. From here to Westport the road skirts Croagh Patrick, where centuries of pilgrims have scrambled barefoot up its scree-covered slopes.

Day six: Westport to Donegal

(Distance: 194km/121mls)

Instead of heading to Achill Island, a rugged gem glittering in the Atlantic, today's path heads inland to the town of Castlebar and the Museum of Country Life. Head north through Ballina back to the shoreline at Inishcrone. This is surf country, where the north Atlantic swell sweeps into Donegal Bay creating world-class surf breaks. Follow the coast to Strandhill before heading into Sligo town, stopping for a short hike to the top of Knocknaree to enjoy the views. After pausing in Sligo to gaze at Jack B. Yeats' paintings at the Model Art Centre, you enter poet and Nobel laureate W.B. Yeats' country – his grave is at the foot of Benbulbin in Drumcliff. The evening light bathes the coastal drive from here to Donegal town in shades of shimmering green.





Dunluce Castle, Co. Antrim

Day seven: Donegal to Derry~Londonderry

(Distance: 167km/104mls)

May the sun linger above as you take the back road over remote bogland to Ardara, then just south to Maghera Beach. The route then heads north again, through Glenties and across the Gweebarra River to The Rosses. As you round Bloody Foreland, windswept Tory Island and the imposing bulk of Horn Head come into view.

Take a break in Ards Forest Park before crossing the bridge of upper Mulroy Bay to the Fanad Peninsula. Follow the Fanad scenic drive for Malin Head – Ireland's most northerly point – until Rathmullan. Whether you take the ferry to cross Lough Swilly (summers only) or drive round the coast, be sure to stop in Burt. On the hill above, you'll find An Grianán Ailigh, an iron-age ring fort presenting stunning views over nearby Londonderry city on the banks of the river Foyle; the only remaining completely walled city in Ireland and UK Capital of Culture 2013.

Day eight: Derry~Londonderry to Belfast

(Distance: 117km/73mls)

On a journey packed with highlights, it isn't easy to single any out any as the pick of the litter. But the Causeway Coast may just get the nod. Leave Londonderry's famous walls behind, following the Causeway Coastal Route to the chalky cliffs at Whiterocks. From here, it's just one superlative after another: cliff-top Dunluce Castle; Bushmills, Ireland's oldest working whiskey distillery (easy on the tasting!); the iconic Giant's Causeway and the headspinning Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge. Pick your jaw back up and on to the Glens of Antrim, nine wonderfully unspoiled valleys, and the pretty villages of Cushendun and Cushendall. Venture to the head of Glenariff for a wander around the waterfalls, before returning to the coast road and on to the shores of Belfast Lough and finally Belfast itself.





Trim Castle, Co. Meath

Day nine: Belfast to Newry

(Distance: 194km/120mls)

This gentle southerly glide along the Irish Sea will take you back to Dublin. As for highpoints, there are plenty in Belfast. Walk the beat from the Ulster Hall with the Belfast Music Tour and your ears will fill with harmonic delights – from Van Morrison to the more contemporary Snow Patrol lads. Raise a glass to the toil of the Harland & Wolff shipbuilders who, 100 years ago, created the floating palace known as the RMS Titanic. Visit the iconic Titanic Belfast® which tells Titanic's story or choose a selection of specialist Titanic and Maritime tours that make the Titanic Quarter a must see in 2012.

Finally, you simply can't leave Belfast without paying a visit to the city's museums including the award-winning Ulster Museum in Botanic Gardens and the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum in Cultra, just a little way out of the city. Leaving the city, head to the Castle Espie Wildfowl and Wetlands Centre on Strangford Lough, an ornithologists paradise and delicate habitat for wintering Brent Geese. From there continue to the understated beauty of the Ards Peninsula. A short ferry journey takes you from Portaferry to Strangford. On the far side of Dundrum Bay is Newcastle and gateway to the Mourne. Lose the wheels for a ramble up Slieve Donard, then spare a thought for the hardy souls who built the wall over its summit. Refuel in the emerging food centre of Warrenpoint before finishing up in the city of Newry.

Day ten: Newry to Dublin

(Distance: 108km/67mls)

For one last taste of Ireland's wilder side, make a beeline for the Cooley Peninsula, home to the Cooley Distillery, Ireland's only independently owned whiskey maker. If tasting, remember to designate a driver! Avoid any urges to jump on the M1 at Dundalk, heading instead through the villages of Castlebellingham, Clogherhead and Termonfeckin. Leave plenty of time for County Meath's Boyne Valley and the richest assemblage of historical sites and monuments found anywhere in Ireland. For early Christian folklore, pop over to the Hill of Slane where St Patrick supposedly lit his famous paschal fire, claiming Ireland for Christianity. From here, the entire Boyne River Valley opens up. Complete the arc by crisscrossing the hedgerow-lined laneways stopping off at Ireland's largest Anglo Norman castle in Trim. Return to Dublin via the coast road, taking in Malahide, Portmarnock, Howth and the truly unique sanctuary of Bull Island.

- ☐ Stop off at New Ross, County Wexford. Board the Dunbrody Famine Ship and walk in the footsteps of a group of Irish famine emigrants on their journey of hope across the Atlantic Ocean
- ☐ Visit the House of Waterford Crystal in Waterford city. Take a guided factory tour giving you first hand access to all areas of traditional crystal production.
- ☐ Pay a visit to Bantry House and Gardens, a majestic stately home overlooking the beautiful Bantry Bay Co. Cork. You can take house tours or relax in the landscaped gardens.
- ☐ Visit the spectacular Aillwee Cave near Ballyvaughan, County Clare. Guided tours will take you through beautifully lit caverns featuring stalactites and stalagmites alongside a thunderous waterfall.
- ☐ Take a day trip to the world famous Aran Islands in Galway Bay – the traditional heart of Ireland.
- ☐ Check out the charming village of Cong in County Mayo. Time appears to have stood still since the classic movie 'The Quiet Man' was filmed here in 1951.
- ☐ Immerse yourself in a vast prehistoric landscape; a natural wild-ecology of blanket bog, dramatic cliffs and coastline at the Céide Fields in north Mayo.
- ☐ Enjoy the spectacular sights of Slieve League, south-west Donegal, the highest sea cliffs in Europe.
- ☐ Take a wander round Glenveagh National Park and Castle in north-west Donegal. It is a remote and hauntingly beautiful wilderness of rugged mountains and pristine lakes, a great place to spot wildlife.
- ☐ Take the ferry from Ballycastle Co. Antrim and lose yourself in the peace and tranquillity of Rathlin Island.
- ☐ Follow in the footsteps of Ireland's Patron Saint and explore the 62 mile long Saint Patrick's Trail through Counties Armagh and Down. Discover a range of Christian Heritage sites relating to Patrick and his legacy.
- ☐ Visit the pretty seaside village of Carlingford Co. Louth, littered with evocative ruins and whitewashed houses. Enjoy the stunning views of Carlingford Lough and the Cooley Mountains and listen to the wealth of myths and legends which make Carlingford a unique holiday experience!

A magical trip following the timeless river Shannon

The largest waterway in the British Isles, our off-the-beaten track adventure begins by following the river past Ardnacrusha – the hydroelectric station that brought power to rural Ireland and still looms large in the Irish national psyche. At the pretty Clare village of Killaloe you hit the first bit of ooze in the form of Lough Derg, a haven for water sports enthusiasts of all types.

Scattered across the surface of Lough Ree, the next flowing patch on the river, are fifty tiny islands, currently uninhabited places like Hare Island and Inchderaun that were once the centres of life along the river and still have hidden remains to prove it.



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